UNITED NATIONS

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

Distr.
GENERAL

E/CN.6/1991/13
26 February 1991

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN
Thirty-fifth session
Vienna, 27 February-8 March 1991
Item 4 of the provisional agenda*

MONITORING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NAIROBI FORWARD-LOOKING STRATEGIES FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN

Improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat

Report of the Secretary-General

CONTENTS

		Paragraphs	Page
INTRODUCTION		1-3	2
I.	STATISTICAL UPDATE	4-7	2
II.	COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION	8	3
III.	INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS	9	3
IV.	RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STEERING COMMITTEE FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN THE SECRETARIAT	10-16	3

*E/CN.6/1991/1.

V.91-21843 7439T

INTRODUCTION

1. At its forty-fifth session, the General Assembly, by resolution 45/125 of 14 December 1990, requested the Secretary-General to forward his report on the status of women in the Secretariat (A/45/548) to the Commission on the Status of Women at its thirty-fifth session.

2. The Assembly in resolution 45/125 urged the Secretary-General to increase the number of women throughout the United Nations system, particularly in senior policy-level and decision-making posts, and to achieve an overall participation rate of 30 per cent by the end of 1990 and 35 per cent by 1995. It also called for, inter alia, a comprehensive evaluation and analysis by the Secretariat of the main obstacles to the improvement of the status of women in the Organization and requested that within existing resources, adequate machinery, with the authority of enforcement and the responsibility of accountability, including a senior-level official, should be maintained and, to the extent possible, strengthened. It also requested that the recommendations of the Steering Committee for the Improvement of the Status of Women in the Secretariat should be submitted to the Commission at its thirty-fifth session and to the Assembly at its forty-sixth session, for consideration under the item entitled "Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women to the Year 2000".

3. The General Assembly at its forty-fourth session agreed that during the short period between the end of its regular session and the opening of the Commission, a brief statistical update would be prepared and a progress report would be presented to the Commission.

I. STATISTICAL UPDATE

4. In the Secretary-General's report (A/45/548, para. 7), the percentage of women in posts subject to geographical distribution was reported at 28.3 per cent at 30 June 1990. During the six months ending on 31 December 1990, the percentage rose to 28.7 per cent. At 31 December, there was no female Assistant Secretary-General and only two Under-Secretaries-General who were women. However, it must be noted that the newly appointed High Commissioner for Refugees, a post not subject to geographical distribution, is a woman. The number of women at the D-2 level had risen to 10 (11.8 per cent) of staff at that level; the number of women at the D-1 level was 14 (6 per cent); and the number of women at the P-5 level was 72 (15.5 per cent). Comparable figures at 30 June 1990 were 8 D-2s (10.1 per cent), 16 D-1s (6.7 per cent) and 78 P-5s (15.8 per cent). Since the end of December 1990, 1 woman has been appointed at the D-1 level and 1 woman has been promoted to that level.

5. General Assembly resolution 45/239 C of 21 December 1990 not only called for the attainment of 35 per cent women in posts subject to geographical distribution overall by 1995, but also requested that, to the extent possible and all things being equal, women should comprise 25 per cent of all posts at levels D-1 and above by 1995. At 31 December 1990, women constituted 6.8 per cent of these levels.

6. During the calendar year 1990, the number of women selected for higher level posts was 30.7 per cent or 39 women compared with 88 men.

7. The percentage of women recruited in the United Nations Secretariat for the calendar year 1990 was 39.2 per cent; 69 women were recruited compared to 107 men. Between July and December 1990, 32 women were recruited. To reach the 30 per cent goal, 27 more women are needed. An annual increase of 1 per cent in the target level will involve the recruitment of about 75 women annually and a net increase of about 26 women annually. Based on an average figure of 2,600 staff in posts subject to geographical distribution, the 30 per cent share for women translates into 772 women. At the end of December 1990 there were 745 women. A 35 per cent share of the total staff figure of 2,600 means 910 women by 1995.

II. COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION

8. The office of the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management, in response to resolution 45/125, has initiated measures for the comprehensive evaluation and analysis of the main obstacles to the improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat. It is envisaged that such a review will consider the problems encountered not only by the Secretariat but also by Member States, the majority of which continue to submit far more men than women candidates. Between 1 January to the end of November 1990, the Office for Human Resources Management received the candidatures of 328 men and only 126 women. The challenge of increasing the number of women in the Secretariat, particularly at the higher and decision-making levels, rests not with the Secretariat alone but also with Member States.

III. INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

9. In response to General Assembly resolution 45/125 that the Secretary-General should maintain and if possible strengthen the office of the Focal Point currently funded from extrabudgetary sources, the Secretary-General is reviewing the possibility of regularizing and strengthening the existing arrangement.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STEERING COMMITTEE FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN THE SECRETARIAT

10. In its fifth report, the Steering Committee pointed out that during the past four years there had been little improvement in the overall situation of women in the United Nations Secretariat in terms of occupying higher level grades. The Committee believed that achieving the 30 per cent target and having women at the higher levels would continue to require the combined co-operative efforts of the entire Secretariat as well as those of Member States.

11. The Committee's recommendations concern the assignment and promotion of women and their recruitment into the Secretariat, improved career prospects for the secretarial occupation, strengthening the mechanisms for monitoring the status of women, and the use of non-gender specific nomenclature.

12. With regard to assignment and promotion, the Committee recommended that in departments and offices with less than 30 per cent women overall and in those with less than 20 per cent women at levels P-5 and above, qualified women candidates should be given priority for promotion and recruitment.

13. With regard to improving the career prospects of staff in secretarial occupation, the Committee recommended that, without prejudice to the outcome of the current restructuring by the Office for Human Resources Management of the secretarial occupation, all staff members in that occupation meeting certain requirements in terms of performance and seniority in grade, should be promoted to the next grade on certification of a satisfactory performance and a potential to perform at the higher level.

14. In an effort to improve the mechanism for monitoring the status of women in the Secretariat, the Committee recommended that the monthly bulletin of the Office for Human Resources Management entitled Statistical Summary: Representation of Member States, which is widely circulated, should be revised and expanded in scope to deal with the issue of gender equality.

15. The Committee also recommended that steps should be taken to ensure the application of non-gender-specific nomenclature within the Secretariat.

16. The Secretary-General will shortly issue a Bulletin on the measures required to implement the Steering Committee's recommendations.